



26/XII Museum Newsletter



Volume 1, Issue 3 Brandon's Military Museum July 2012

26 FIELD REGIMENT RCA/XII MANITOBA DRAGOONS MUSEUM • BRANDON MB

**The 26th Field Regiment
RCA/XII Manitoba Dragoons
Museum remembers a good
soldier and great friend.**



*Figure 1 LCol Ross Thompson, CD
from his days as CO of 26 Fd Regt RCA
and 38 CBG ATG*

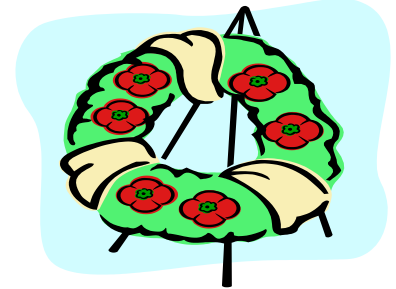
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Friends of the Museum who wish to make a donation or a bequest of Artefacts or financial assistance to the Museum are always welcome. Please contact the Museum Treasurer, Lorna Ball at rqball@mymts.net or call 204-728-7665

Lieutenant Colonel Thompson passed away peacefully on 9th of July 2012. Ross was born in Brandon, Manitoba on the 24th of May 1956 and was raised and educated in the Brandon area. He joined 26 Field Regiment Royal Canadian Artillery in 1976 and served with the unit for the rest of his life. Lieutenant Colonel Thompson over the years performed several duties with 71 Battery from Gun Position Officer to Battery Commander. In 1993, he was promoted to Major and appointed Battery Commander of Headquarters and Services Battery. In 1996 he was appointed to the position of Deputy Commanding Officer of 26 Field Regiment

From 2002 to 2006, Lieutenant Colonel Thompson was double tasked in the positions of Battery Commander for 71 Battery and the Deputy Commanding Officer of 26 Field Regiment. During his tenure with the Army Reserve, Lieutenant Colonel Thompson has attended a Peacekeeping course in 2001 and several General Safety Officer Courses and has also completed the Militia Command Staff Course in 2003. Lieutenant Colonel Thompson was employed as the Rear Party Commander for Operation Assistance during the Manitoba Flood of 1997 and was deployed as a Company Commander in 2003 with Operation Peregrine in British Columbia supporting the Province's firefighting efforts. Lieutenant Colonel Thompson was promoted to his current rank in December 2006 and appointed Commanding Officer of 38 Canadian Brigade Group Artillery Tactical Group, which includes 10 Field Regiment, 26 Field Regiment and 116 Independent Field Battery RCA.



Lieutenant Colonel Thompson was a great friend of the Museum and truly cared for all the people who served with him and will be missed greatly. A service to celebrate his life was held at Central United Church on 16th July 2012. At the Service LCol Dalal announced the new M-109 will be named in honour of LCol Thompson.

The 26th Field Regiment RCA/XII Manitoba Dragoons Museum a big hit at the Royal Manitoba Winter Fair

The Museum volunteers put on an excellent display at the RMWF. Young and old attended the 26XII Museum booth. Canadian Army uniforms for the First, Second World Wars and Afghanistan were available to the visitors to view and try on.



Figure 2 Young fair-goer enjoys colouring the bisons



Figure 3 Museum volunteer Rev Glenn Ball Chats to a visitor in front of CFRC Vehicle

Over two hundred children and adults braved the deep fall to visit the Museum booth and to try on the uniforms. Many also tried the wagon rides provided by the RMWF.



Figure 4 Looking sharp in Cold War helmet and radio



Figure 5 Youngsters enjoy trying Combats old and new.



Figure 6 Youngsters enjoy the wagon rides.



Figure 7 Four horse hitch.



Figure 8 It fits, WWI/WWII helmet.



Figure 9 Another perfect fit.



Figure 10 Little Peacekeeper.

My Wartime Story by Jack Bennett

In 1930 while in my teens with my parents, William and Violet Bennett and brother, Bill, we immigrated to Canada from Doncaster, Yorkshire, England and settled in Coulter, Manitoba. I returned to England in 1939 to work in my uncle and aunt's hotel (Marcia Hotel) and was drafted into the services on October 17, 1940 even though I was a Canadian citizen. A man from the army came to the house and informed me that the Canadians were under conscription this was untrue – they weren't under conscription until later. Training consisted of three months at Rhyl Kinmill Park Camp in North Wales. My area of training was as MT and Technical Engineer (searchlights and big trucks 5- ton) as operator and driver. There was very little training on firing guns, etc. One man was in the office all the time, and then was sent to fight and he did not even know how to load his rifle. I was sent to Shrapnel Barracks, Woollick, South England. Only four of us passed as driver mechanics, the rest of the company stayed in England. On February 24, 1941, while on 48 hours leave I married Jennie Gair, my girlfriend whom I dated since 1939, in Bishopthorpe. When drafted we were sent back to Liverpool to board the Duchess of York for Singapore.

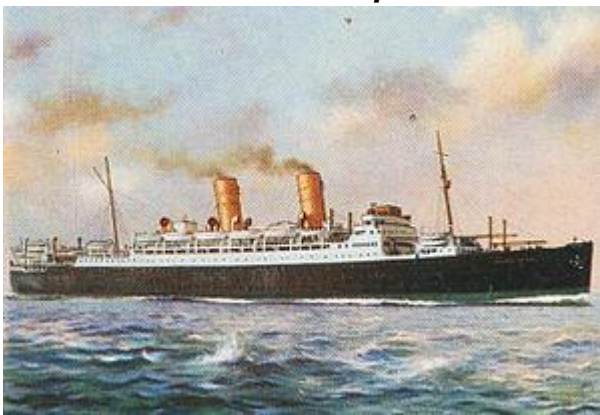


Figure 11 SS Duchess of York

From Wikipedia the free encyclopedia



Figure 12 HMS Lord Nelson

From Maritime Quest.

We sailed to Scapa Flow, Scotland and sat for 4 days waiting for the rest of the convoy. The Lord Nelson (Battleship) and Cornwall (Cruiser) were our escorts. There were 14 boats in the convoy. In April 1941 we set sail for Singapore via Freetown, Capetown, Bombay and Columbo. It took two months. We landed in Singapore in June 1941 and journeyed to Changy Barracks, and from there we were sent to positions in Malaya where I was put in the MT & Technical stores. My job was to supply them with parts for trucks and searchlights. After 3 or 4 months in the office, I put in for a dispatch rider as I was fed up with being in the office all the time. The sergeant crossed my name off because I was the only one that knew the parts in the store. The man who got the dispatch rider on his first trip never came back. One of the lads went to fetch a battery of Malays and he was later found in the truck shot in the back of the head. All we had was eight Swordfish bombers, they made a one day raid and not one returned. We also had fighters from the First World War that got out of synch and shot their own propellers off. We had 15 hundredweight gun carriages (small tanks) and the Japanese had 25 ton. Three of our 16-inch guns faced to sea but the Japanese came down the mainland, it sounded like a freight train coming.

During the fight, we were pushed back onto the island of Singapore by Japanese forces. Three hundred Japanese planes attacked the Princes of Wales and The Repulse



Figure 13 HMS Prince of Wales

From Wikipedia the free encyclopedia



Figure 42 HMS Repulse

From Wikipedia the free encyclopedia

(battleships) while they were cruising by Singapore, both were sunk. They stated that the Captain of the Prince of Wales sat on the deck in his rocking chair smoking his pipe as it sank. On February 17, 1942 the British Forces capitulated to overwhelming Japanese forces and on surrender we were taken to Changi Barracks as POWs. The barracks were big and made of cement and tile and they had been stripped clean. There weren't any beds, blankets – nothing. For water we had to carry it up from the sea. Once I tried to climb a coconut tree but couldn't. Some men collecting firewood came along with a crosscut saw and a big Welsh guy and I cut the tree down and shared the coconuts. We were there for 2 or 3 months. We were then moved to Havelock Road, the Sheik's old barracks, which were badly infested with bed bugs. In the camp I worked as batsman and cooked the Officer's meals. I contacted fish poison and had to be taken to the next camp. I was taken on a stretcher. The handlers were scared that the Japanese would shoot them. I was sent back the next day after been given one pill. Three lads changed places with three other lads that were going to Malaya – two were from the Manchester Regiment and one was from the Malay volunteer, a London Tailor, who could speak and write English, Chinese and Malay. They got on the working party to Malaya and escaped from the working party. The Malays at Cola Puma turned them in for \$5.00 a head.



Figure 15 Changi Barracks Sinagapore

Credit George Aspinall www.abc.net.au



Figure 16 Aerial view RAF Changi

credit www.google.ca

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They were brought back to camp and put cleaning the latrines for the Sheiks who had gone over to the Japanese side. The Japanese came in one day and got some of the Officers and said this is what is going to happen. Three officers were taken out and shot, we were there for 4 or 5 months. We were not allowed a knife, fork, pencil, pen or paper. Our only piece of clothing was a loincloth, which I still have. I was originally issued by the British with a shirt and shorts, which I sold for food. We were loaded on trains to be taken to Bang Pon (Thailand). After we were unloaded at Bang Pon, we were marched to Chungkai (Thailand) for 2 days and then 3 or 4 days through the jungle to Kinsia where we started working on the railway – making the railway bed, ballast ties and laying track. Dysentery broke out in the camp and a lot of Malays died. Once in the jungle we had to make camp wherever we stopped. We were worked from dawn until dusk and then we would maybe have barges of rice, bamboo, etc. to unload. Once we were being moved down the river on a barge. It was very crowded with men as well as two pigs. One of the pigs was suffocating and no one but me would put it out of its suffering. We ate what we could and rendered what fat we could for future use. A lot of Dutch-Eurasians came to the camp as POW's. At another of our parties we had some of the lads dressed as women and you could not tell the difference. The Japanese took them into a hut and made them undress as they thought that we had women in the camp. The Japanese had a brothel in every camp and they got a ticket every so often to go. The Japanese used to celebrate the fall of Singapore every six months. Our Officers had just come from having a wash in the river when the Japanese were having their celebration; their compound was right near the Officers huts. The Japanese used to shout "Banzai" which means hurrah and when it came to the third time some of the Officers in the hut shouted "Benjo" which means go to the toilet. The Japanese's took all the Officers, with hardly anything on, out of the hut. They lined them up on the Parade Square and paraded them. One of the Japanese soldiers would go along and slap their faces. That started at 10:00 in the morning and went on until 2:00 in the morning. We were moved to Taro on April 21, 1943 where we worked on the railway. We were taken up to Nong Pladuck by barge on November 22, 1943 where we would have to go out at night and load flat cars with gravel for the railway bed. For six months my wife, Jennie, did not even know if I was alive. The only correspondence allowed was a postcard on which the prisoners had to indicate that they were in excellent health and were working for pay even though that was incorrect. My wife was only allowed sixteen words on a postcard that she sent to me and she had to be careful what she wrote or they would destroy my mail. I was one of the thousands of men who built the bridge over the River Kwai. The Bridge was a grim relic that inspired a celebrated novel and motion picture. Seeking a strategic railway link between Thailand and Burma in the Second World War, the Japanese forced Allied POW's and Asian workers to lay more than 250 miles of track through malaria-infested jungle. Thousands died of malnutrition, disease and in Allied bombings that destroyed part of the bridge. The bridge was constructed of cement and pilings and consisting of eleven curved steel spans totaling nearly eight hundred feet. Today the symmetry of the bridge is broken by two trapezoidal spans near its eastern end. Allied bombings raids knocked down three of the curved spans. The Japanese replaced these with two larger trapezoidal sections. While I was working on the bridge it was not bombed. When the war ended I was building air raid shelters 90 miles from Bangkok in the mountains. The Japanese never got to use these shelters as they lost the war before they were ready to use. Today the railway lines carries tourists from Bangkok to Kanchanaburi near the span where neat rows of gravestones mark

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the graves of about half of the 16,500 POWs who died building the 'Death Railway. More than 90,000 Asian workers also lost their lives working on this railway.



Figure 17 Bridge on River Kwai

credit www.google.ca



Figure 18 Damaged Bridge

credit www.roy-mark.com/bridge

Crosses were carved, which were erected in the middle of the graveyard when a prisoner was buried. A piece of paper with his name on was stored in a quinine bottle by the cross. When the bottle was full of names, they buried it by the cross hoping someday the war would be over and their comrade's graves would be marked. Prisoners who died were buried in rice sacks made from rice straw. Today the graves are marked and the Thai people care for the graveyard. Treatment in the POW camps was inhumane; one scoop of rice to eat three times a day was our food. On a very rare occasion we shared half a pig amongst 600 men. Also on rare occasions we were fed marrow and cucumbers. If you had 10 cents you could sometimes buy a duck egg. Prisoners who became sick with malaria, dysentery or cholera had to catch 20 flies a day or their faces would get slapped. I had malaria thirty four times but did not have it again after I was bitten by a scorpion. Prisoners caught stealing food were put in 'hot boxes' made of bamboo. They couldn't sit up, standup or lay down properly; a hole was dug in one end for a toilet. Some were sent to the guardroom to be kicked till they fell down then kicked again until they got up. One Dutchman, who was put up a tree was left there until he fell out. Prisoners were forced to salute all Japanese soldiers. Anyone trying to escape was immediately shot. I remember four men being shot for trying to escape - one with cholera. When the war was over they found piles of undelivered mail in POW camps. At the beginning of the war, a prisoner was paid 10 cents a day but after they got in the jungle their pay was discontinued. A dime would buy a duck egg that prisoners considered a luxury. They were supposed to receive 200 cigarettes but only 18 of the 200 ever got to the prisoners. Red Cross parcels contained 22 articles for each prisoner, but they never received parcels intact. I received a can of jam and another prisoner received sardines that he shared with the other six men in his hut. We used the jam to improve the taste of our rice. The following were punishments for stealing or being out of camp. They would stand them outside the guardroom until they fell down and then kick them until they got up. They made you kneel down and tied your arms to a bamboo stick to the tied back of your legs. A POW Sergeant threw water out and a Dutch Officer came along and gave him heck and poked him in the stomach with his cane. The Sergeant knocked him flat and he was taken in front of the General and the General told the Dutch Officer if he did it again he would get the same.

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On November 8, 1944 we moved to Tamarvan and then on January 17, 1945 to Tamakan, and on March 20, 1945 then Nakumivk. I was also in the following POW's Camps – Rajar, Tardan, Tonsh, Ranv, Rintin and Undarto. On August 27 1945, two American Soldiers and a Thai Soldier freed me from my final camp at Undarto. We travelled by truck to Bangkok, and then flew to Rangoon and from there we sailed on the Cynthia to Southampton. I returned home weighting 89 pounds, I started at 150 pounds. During my imprisonment I also suffered from dysentery, beriberi, and vitamin deficiency. I still have in my possession all the postcards that my wife and I wrote to each other during the war. My wife and I came to Canada in 1946 and farmed in the Coulter area until ill health made it impossible. We then moved to Rivers Camp Air Force Base where I worked on the base. After the base closed, I worked in Brandon at the post office until retiring because of ill health in 1972. My wife and I still reside in Brandon MB. and I have three children, Joan of Rivers, MB., Christine of Brandon MB, and Steven of Erickson MB. (Jack Bennett died on 21 August 2008).

Jack Bennett Collection

Mr. Bennett's collection of unit, rank, hat, badges, crests and pictures is very extensive and an exception collection. The collection which is currently in 37 large glassed frames is on loan to the Museum from the Bennett Family. The Museum is greatly appreciative to have this collection and is constructing new displays cases to display this unique collection.



Figure 19 Mr. Stephen Bennett displays a picture form his Father's Collection.



Figure 20 Mr. Stephen Bennett explains to museums Collections Manager the significance of a picture.



Figure 21 Bennett Collection Frame 25 assorted rank belt and hat badges



Figure 22 Bennett Collection Frame 1 WWI CEF hat badges



Figure 23 Bennett Collection Frame 34 RCN trade badges

Identify the Artefact



Answer to last issues, Identify the Artefact; is The Canadian Army 1945 Display created by Wilf Falconer, which is found in the West Room



**Identify the Artefact:
Answer is in next issue of the 26XII Museum Newsletter**

M-109 Self Propelled Howitzer Acquisition Project update:

The museum has received word this week from DDSAL Ottawa that the M-109 acquisition has been approved and M-109 CFR 77299 have been selected for the Museum and 26 Fd Regt RCA. The Unit's M-109 is in Montreal being prepared for monument status. During this process the powertrain and transmission will be removed. All the openings will be sealed and the vehicle made environmentally safe for display. The gun will be decommissioned and sealed also. Once all this process is completed it will be delivered to the Brandon Armoury where it will be displayed on the east side of the Armoury. The Museum wishes to thank LCol Dalal for all his support during this project.



Figure 24 M-109 Self Propelled Howitzer

Vimy Night Fundraiser and Auction

On the 31st March 26 Field Regiment RCA hosted the Thirty Second annual Vimy Night Fundraiser and Auction in support of the Museum. The doors opened at 6:00 pm and an excellent Chinese Food Buffet provided by the Double Happiness Restaurant was served at 6:30 pm. The Dinner and Auction was well attended by the supporters of the Museum and the fundraising exceeded expectation. This format will be adopted for the 2013 Vimy Night Fundraiser. The evening was great fun for all who attended. Edward James came in WWI period



Figure 25 Double Happiness

uniform of the first Canadian Mounted Rifles. The XII Manitoba Dragoons Cadets 2528 RCACC of Virden and the 71 Bty 2520 RCACC of Brandon helped with the set up for the event and were a great help all evening long staying to help the Museum volunteers to clean up the Armoury and put it ship shape again.



Figure 26 Ed James as an S/SSgt of the 1st Cdn Mounted Rifles

The XII Dragoons Cadets donated to the Museum a Bruges Liberation Medallion which was presented to the XII Manitoba Dragoons in 1944. Cadet MCPL Serena Peacock presents to Don Berry (Col ret'd) the Medallion for which the Museum is grateful.



Figure 27 Presentation of the Bruges Liberation Medallion RCACC 2528

The museum presented a cheque for five thousand dollars to Her Worship Mayor Shari Decter Hirst for the Brandon Veteran's Memorial fund. The Picture with the Mayor are Don Berry (Col ret'd) Museum Board President and Chuck Larocque (Maj ret'd) Veteran's Memorial Fundraising Chairman.



Figure 28 Cheque Presentation



Figure 29 Verda

The George Brothers visit their former home

In May the former Armoury Caretaker Russell (Rus) George son's Brian and his wife Amy BC/Phillippines, Terry - Cranbrook BC, Dave - Brandon MB visited the Museum. The George Family lived in the Armoury on the third floor in what is now the Sea, Army, Air and Navy League Cadet Offices. The boys related several interesting stories of life in the Armoury. The view from the crow's nest down to the parade square where the New Year 's Eve dance was held was always something to see.



Figure 30 Visit of the George Brothers



Figure 31 View from crow's nest.

The George Brothers came for a trip down memory lane. The museum staff was happy to hear of some of the details of how the Armoury was maintained in the 1950s. Coal fired boilers and six children were a full time job for Rus and Muriel (Mickie) George. Our thanks to the Boys for giving us information on the building and the neighbourhood from times past.

Second Annual D Day Tea

On the 4th of June the museum in co-operation with 60 RCSCC SWIFTSURE Sea Cadets held a tea for Veterans. The Tea was well attended by Veterans, their family and friends, a good time was had by all. Our thanks the Lt (N) Debbie Mc Arthur CO SWIFTSURE and the sea cadets for all the help and assistance. The 26 Fd Regt RCA Pipes and Drums and the SWIFTSURE Corps Band performed.



Figure 32 The 26 Fd Pipes and Drums

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Figure 33 SWIFTSURE Band.

**Catch a bus,
Drive a car,
Ride your bike or
walk.**

The Museum is open every Tuesday from 9:00 am to 4:00 pm closed for lunch. For tours other times call:

Edd. at 204 726-3498 or
Gord at 204 727-7691.

Figure 34 Bus Bench on Richmond Avenue East

Thanks to our Donors for their donations

Donors of Artefacts:

Medics of 26 Fd Regt RCA - Medic items
SGT Jay Lussier - First Nations Hammer
Ralph and Betty Moore Field Gun Shot
Alexander Whitelaw Photo of George Whitelaw WW1
Kathy Allen XII MB Dragoons Militaria of Trooper
Alistair Findlay
Russell Atkins Box belonging to Pte MM Atkinson
WW1
WO Fred Pratt 1980's 1 RCHA uniform and kit
2528 RCACC XII MB Dragoons Army Cadets Bruges
Liberation Medallion for XII MB Dragoons 1944
Michael Roberts Medals of Major F. Alex Roberts
WW2
Jack Stothard Medals of Herbert John Atkinson
South Africa and WW1
Dennis and Mary Drummond Medals and militaria of
Sgt A.B. Armit
Bob Speight Discharge papers/Honourable Service
Pin of Sgt Horace Speight
Steven Bennett -- Loan of the Bennett Collection
Donors of Gifts in Kind:
HLCOL Felstead XP laptop
Mr. and Mrs. Dennis Drummond - Militaria
Mr. Jack Stothard - Militaria
Regular Donations:
Dave Millar \$10.00
LCOL Hammond \$20.00
Capt Kevin Tutthill \$25.00
Jack Houston \$200.00
Col (ret'd) and Mrs. McDonald \$100.00
Mr. AR Neale \$100.00
Capt (ret'd) Edd McArthur \$120.00

The Museum is located on the South West corner of 11th Street and Victoria Avenue. For Information on the Museum and tours. Be sure to check us out on the web at: www.26fdregmuseum.com or www.12mbdragoons.com

Or e-mail the following:

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This News letter is published by SDI under the authority of the Commanding Officer of 38 CBG ATG and by The Board of 26 Field Regiment RCA /XII MB Dragoons Museum Board. Please forward any inquiries to 26fdregCurator@wcgwave.ca. My thanks to Don Berry, Sandy Armstrong, Lorna Ball and Gord Sim for the valuable help with putting the Newsletter together,

www.26fdregmuseum.com or www.12mbdragoons.com